#### Q & A December 17, 2014

# Q. Why don't you publish the entire County budget in the newspaper instead of just a brief summation?

A. We publish in the newspaper what is required by state law and what is adopted at the county meeting. It would be foolish to pay over \$1,000 for a more detailed budget to be printed in the newspaper when it would be impossible to even put the entire breakdown on a single newspaper page.

#### Q. How detailed is the entire county budget?

A. The detailed county budget is very extensive and consists of over a 100 pages and probably closer to two hundred. If anyone wants to look at the entire budget, all you need to do is come by the office and we will be glad for you to look through it or you can file an open records request for the entire document at the cost of 10 cents per page plus staff time. There is absolutely nothing in the budget that is private, but it can be very difficult to understand since it is so extensive. The staff, elected officials and I spend weeks going through the budget during our annual preparation. It is also part of the county audit process.

## Q. What is all the grading that is going on across from United Community Bank on Hwy 515 next to FATZ?

A. When Chick-fil-A purchased the property in Blairsville for a new restaurant, part of the process was to acquire an entrance permit from GDOT. The permit expires soon so they are going ahead and installing the turn lane and entrance. Chick-fil-A has not given a press release on the construction schedule of a new restaurant at this time, but indications are that we could be on the 2015 schedule. However, we caution everyone to not assume too much until a public announcement by the restaurant is made.

The following questions related to your property taxes were provided by Tax Commissioner Lee Knight.

#### Q. When are Union County property taxes due?

**A.** Taxes for real estate and business personal property are due in Union County by December 20, 2014. Mobile home taxes are due May 15<sup>th</sup> each year. The taxes should be paid at the Tax Commissioners office located in the courthouse. You can now pay your property taxes online at <a href="https://www.uniongatax.com">www.uniongatax.com</a> or check to see if your mortgage escrow account has paid them.

### Q. What happens if property taxes are paid past the due date?

A. Property taxes that are paid or postmarked after December 20, 2014 are charged 1% interest per month. Once the tax bill becomes 90 days past due the state requires a 10% penalty be added along with the 1% interest per month. Only properties with homestead exemption with a tax bill under \$500.00 are exempt from the 10% 90 day past due penalty. A FiFa or lien may be filed on your property by the tax commissioner once it is 90 days past due.

## Q. I am on a fixed income and do not have all the money to pay my taxes this year. What can I do?

**A.** The Union County Tax Commissioners office will accept partial payments on property taxes. They will also contract a payment schedule to work with you if you are behind on your taxes. Please don't

hesitate to contact the Tax Commissioner to set up a payment plan so you won't get further behind on your taxes or have a tax lien filed on your property.

## Q. Do you have any figures on tax collections and percentage of property taxes collected for 2013?

A. Total property tax collection dollars for 2013 are \$19.3 million for School, County, and State taxes. The collection percentage for mobile homes is 97.5% and for real property (land and homes) the percentage collected is above 97.2%.

#### Q. What does our property tax money go for and how is it spent?

A. The Board of Education gets approximately 66% of your property tax. The county gets around 33% of your property tax and the state only gets 1/10 of 1%. Of all the taxes you pay, 99.9% of your property tax money stays here in Union County. Your tax dollars go toward the maintenance and operations to support administration of county government and the public school system. Your tax dollars pay to build and repair public buildings and bridges, to maintain county roads, to pay court expenses, county jail and law enforcement, recreation and to provide fire protection. Your tax money also pays to provide for public health and sanitation. County government and the Board of Education salaries and benefits are also part of the expenses paid with your property taxes.